

Tibor Stelbaczky DPR opening speech

Dear Participants,

There is no doubt that the health of European Citizens is a major determinant of the Union competitiveness. And ultimately health is a key factor of quality of our life and this is why even the Lisbon Treaty declares that high level protection of human health should be taken into account in all EU policies.

I think all of us here agree that, by using the words of the president of the Commission of Mr Juncker, health is a “big thing” so this is an area where the EU should be big as well.

In Brussels, nowadays it is very fashionable to have discussions on the performance of the European health systems as an important driver to meet challenges laying ahead of our society.

It is true, we are living in a European Union where the ageing of the population is more and more alarming, where fewer and fewer taxpayers finance the national social security schemes including healthcare systems. It is very important to see how resources contribute to better health outcomes.

However when we are speaking about outcomes, we often lose sight of the determinants of the population health conditions, while reducing harmful use of alcohol or smoking, promoting healthy environment and healthy nutrition is also a prerequisite of enabling citizens to live a better life.

Without paying sufficient attention to this dimension, health policy will only mean sick policy and health care will not be more than sick care.

Since 2010 the Hungarian Government have introduced a series of measures aiming at changing the health determinants of Hungarian people.

- We banned the smoking in public places,
- from this May – subject to the coming decision of the Court of Justice – we are going to introduce the plain packaging of tobacco products.
- A public health tax has been introduced on unhealthy foodstuffs in order to make them less attractive and to introduce risks haring with manufacturers in respect of the disease burden attributed to these goods.
- legislation on public catering was also adopted in order that schools, hospitals, nursery homes etc. offer more healthy food to their residents.

Speaking of the subject matter this seminar of today, Hungary was the third country in the EU to introduce legislation on the maximum content of TFA in foodstuffs. According to the ministerial decree applicable since February 2014, it is forbidden to place on the market food products in which the amount of trans fats exceeds 2 g for every 100 g of the total fat content of food products provided or sold to end consumers.

We were very delighted when the European Commission published its report of last December regarding transfats in foods and in the overall diet of the Union population. The report concludes that legislative steps are necessary to limit the TFA content of foodstuffs, and this policy option deserves further assessment.

The very aim of this seminar is to contribute to the debate on EU wide transfatty acid reduction in foodstuffs. We are convinced that harmonization in this field would equally contribute to a higher health protection and even playing field for market players.

Today you will hear the views of the most important governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and you will also be provided the opportunity to raise your questions and share your opinions.

I hope that we will have a fruitful and intensive programme and at the end you are welcome to our cocktail reception with not only healthy but also delicious snacks and drinks.

Finally let me express my gratitude to all our helpers, in particularly György Hölvényi member of the European Parliament and the European Public Health Alliance.